

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

Ruchel Blumenfeld, individually and on behalf
of all others similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

C.A. No:

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

-v.-

GC Services Limited Partnership and
John Does 1-25,

Defendant(s).

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Ruchel Blumenfeld(hereinafter “Plaintiff”) brings this Class Action Complaint by and through her attorneys, Stein Saks PLLC, against Defendant GC Services Limited Partnership (hereinafter “Defendant GC”), individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated, pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, based upon information and belief of Plaintiff’s counsel, except for allegations specifically pertaining to Plaintiff, which are based upon Plaintiff’s personal knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

1. Congress enacted the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (“FDCPA” or the “Act”) in 1977 in response to the "abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors." 15 U.S.C. §1692(a). At that time, Congress was concerned that "abusive debt collection practices contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to material instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy."

Id. Congress concluded that "existing laws...[we]re inadequate to protect consumers," and that "the effective collection of debts" does not require "misrepresentation or other abusive debt collection practices." 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(b) & (c).

2. Congress explained that the purpose of the Act was not only to eliminate abusive debt collection practices, but also to "insure that those debt collectors who refrain from using abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged." *Id.* § 1692(e). After determining that the existing consumer protection laws were inadequate. *Id.* § 1692(b), Congress gave consumers a private cause of action against debt collectors who fail to comply with the Act. *Id.* § 1692k.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

3. The Court has jurisdiction over this class action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et. seq. The Court has pendent jurisdiction over any state law claims in this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a).

4. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2) as this is where a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claim occurred.

NATURE OF THE ACTION

5. Plaintiff brings this class action on behalf of a class of New York consumers under § 1692 et seq. of Title 15 of the United States Code, commonly referred to as the Fair Debt Collections Practices Act ("FDCPA"), and

6. Plaintiff is seeking damages and declaratory relief.

PARTIES

7. Plaintiff is a resident of the State of New York, County of Kings, and resides at 1150 50th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11219.

8. Defendant GC is a "debt collector" as the phrase is defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a)(6) and as used in the FDCPA and can be served process upon C T Corporation System, 28 Liberty St., New York, New York, 10005.

9. Upon information and belief, Defendant is a company that uses the mail, telephone, and facsimile and regularly engages in business the principal purpose of which is to attempt to collect debts alleged to be due another.

10. John Does 1-25, are fictitious names of individuals and businesses alleged for the purpose of substituting names of Defendants whose identities will be disclosed in discovery and should be made parties to this action.

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

11. Plaintiffs bring this claim on behalf of the following case, pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a) and 23(b)(3).

12. The Class consists of:

- a. all individuals with addresses in the State of New York;
- b. to whom Defendant GC sent a collection letter attempting to collect a consumer debt;
- c. that states that the amount due may be increasing and yet demands an exact payment of the amount listed in the letter;
- d. which letter was sent on or after a date one (1) year prior to the filing of this action and on or before a date twenty-one (21) days after the filing of this action.

13. The identities of all class members are readily ascertainable from the records of Defendant and those companies and entities on whose behalf it attempts to collect debts and/or has purchased debts.

14. Excluded from the Plaintiff Class are the Defendant and all officers, members, partners, managers, directors and employees of the Defendant and their respective immediate families, and legal counsel for all parties to this action, and all members of their immediate families.

15. There are questions of law and fact common to the Plaintiff Class, which common issues predominate over any issues involving only individual class members. The principal issue is whether the Defendant's written communications to consumers, in the forms attached as Exhibits A, violate 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e.

16. The Plaintiff's claims are typical of the class members, as all are based upon the same facts and legal theories. The Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Plaintiff Class defined in this complaint. The Plaintiff has retained counsel with experience in handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions, and neither the Plaintiff nor her attorneys have any interests, which might cause them not to vigorously pursue this action.

17. This action has been brought, and may properly be maintained, as a class action pursuant to the provisions of Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure because there is a well-defined community interest in the litigation:

- a. **Numerosity:** The Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that the Plaintiff Class defined above is so numerous that joinder of all members would be impractical.

- b. **Common Questions Predominate:** Common questions of law and fact exist as to all members of the Plaintiff Class and those questions predominate over any questions or issues involving only individual class members. The principal issue is whether the Defendant's written communications to consumers, in the forms attached as Exhibit A violate 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.
- c. **Typicality:** The Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the members of the Plaintiff Class. The Plaintiff and all members of the Plaintiff Class have claims arising out of the Defendants' common uniform course of conduct complained of herein.
- d. **Adequacy:** The Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Plaintiff Class insofar as Plaintiff has no interests that are adverse to the absent members of the Plaintiff Class. The Plaintiff is committed to vigorously litigating this matter. Plaintiff has also retained counsel experienced in handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions. Neither the Plaintiff nor her counsel have any interests which might cause them not to vigorously pursue the instant class action lawsuit.
- e. **Superiority:** A class action is superior to the other available means for the fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy because individual joinder of all members would be impracticable. Class action treatment will permit a large number of similarly situated persons to prosecute their common claims in a single forum efficiently and without unnecessary duplication of effort and expense that individual actions would engender.

18. Certification of a class under Rule 23(b)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure is also appropriate in that the questions of law and fact common to members of the Plaintiff Class predominate over any questions affecting an individual member and in that a class action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy.

19. Depending on the outcome of further investigation and discovery, Plaintiff may, at the time of class certification motion, seek to certify a class(es) only as to particular issues pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(c)(4).

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

20. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered above herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.

21. Some time prior to February 12, 2021, an obligation was allegedly incurred to Citibank, N.A.

22. The Citibank, N.A. obligation arose out of transactions which were primarily for personal, family or household purposes.

23. The alleged Citibank, N.A. obligation is a "debt" as defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(5).

24. Citibank, N.A. is a "creditor" as defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(4).

25. Citibank, N.A. contracted with the Defendant to collect the alleged debt.

26. Defendant collects and attempts to collect debts incurred or alleged to have been incurred for personal, family or household purposes on behalf of creditors using the United States Postal Services, telephone and internet.

Violation – February 12, 2021 Collection Letter

27. On or about February 12, 2021, Defendant sent the Plaintiff a collection letter (the “Letter”) regarding the alleged debt owed to Citibank, N.A.. A true and correct copy of the Letter is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

28. The Letter states: Citibank, N.A. has authorized GC Services to offer you the opportunity to settle your account. If you are getting a tax refund, please consider using the funds to take advantage of this offer.

SETTLEMENT OFFER: \$7,284.77

To accept this offer and make a payment using a debit card, you can visit our website at www.gcpayonline.com and enter your GC Number when prompted. You can also call our automated toll-free payment line at 844-694-2082. Please note the payment must be for the exact amount stated in this letter and must be received no later than fourteen (14) days from the date of this letter or this particular offer will be null and void.

29. The letter also states the following: “*As of the date of this letter, you owe \$14,569.54. Because of interest, late charges, and other charges that may vary from day to day, the amount due on the day you pay may be greater. Hence, if you pay the amount shown above, an adjustment may be necessary after we receive your payment, in which event we will inform you.”

30. The statement that implies that the amount could be increasing due to interest and adjustments is preceded by an asterisk which is not referenced to any specific point in the letter.

31. Therefore, the statement that the amount is increasing could be alluding to both the total balance of \$14,569.54 and the Settlement Amount of \$7,284.77.

32. If the overall balance is increasing, it is reasonable to assume that the amount of settlement (which is half of the total balance) would be increasing as well, yet the letter contradicts itself by saying that the payment must be the exact amount stated in this letter.

33. The Letter is false and deceptive to the Plaintiff because it states that the payment must be an exact amount, yet it also states that the amount may increase and the amount owed on the day Plaintiff pays may be greater

34. Due to the confusing and misleading language Plaintiff did not know whether the total amount would increase and thereby increase the settlement offer as well.

35. Defendant's deceptive, misleading and unfair representations with respect to its collection effort were material misrepresentations that affected and frustrated Plaintiff's ability to intelligently respond to Defendant's collection efforts because Plaintiff could not adequately respond to the Defendant's demand for payment of this debt.

36. Defendant's actions created an appreciable risk to Plaintiff of being unable to properly respond or handle Defendant's debt collection.

37. Plaintiff was confused and misled to her detriment by the statements in the dunning letter, and relied on the contents of the letter to her detriment.

38. Plaintiff would have pursued a different course of action were it not for the statutory violation.

39. As a result of Defendant's deceptive, misleading and unfair debt collection practices, Plaintiff has been damaged.

COUNT I
VIOLATIONS OF THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT 15 U.S.C. §1692e
et seq.

40. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs above herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.

41. Defendant's debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards the Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.

42. Pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692e, a debt collector may not use any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt.

43. Defendant violated § 1692e:

- a. As the Letter it is open to more than one reasonable interpretation, at least one of which is inaccurate.
- b. By making a false and misleading representation in violation of §1692e(10).

44. By reason thereof, Defendant is liable to Plaintiff for judgment that Defendant's conduct violated Section 1692e et seq. of the FDCPA, and Plaintiff is entitled to an award of actual damages, statutory damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY

45. Pursuant to Rule 38 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Plaintiff hereby requests a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff Ruchel Blumenfeld, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, demands judgment from Defendant GC as follows:

1. Declaring that this action is properly maintainable as a Class Action and certifying Plaintiff as Class representative, and Raphael Deutsch, Esq. as Class Counsel;
2. Awarding Plaintiff and the Class statutory damages;
3. Awarding Plaintiff and the Class actual damages;
4. Awarding Plaintiff costs of this Action, including reasonable attorneys' fees and expenses;
5. Awarding pre-judgment interest and post-judgment interest; and
6. Awarding Plaintiff and the Class such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

Respectfully Submitted,

STEIN SAKS, PLLC

/s/Raphael Deutsch

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